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OCI No. 2428/62

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
19 October 1962

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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Evidence of a Soviet Military Commitment
to Defend Cuba

1. Although Cuban leaders may have requested admission into the Warsaw Pact and probably have sought an unrestricted Soviet commitment to come to Cuba's defense militarily in the event of a US attack, there is no evidence that any such requests have been granted.

2. Raul Castro arrived in Moscow on 2 July and left on 17 July. Even before he left Soviet territory, the first Soviet vessels had left Black Sea ports for Cuba with the initial cargoes of equipment for the SAM and coastal defense missile installations. The decision to send this equipment to Cuba must have been taken at the latest by mid-June and probably earlier.

3. When Che Guevara and his mission arrived in Moscow on 26 August, the buildup of Soviet equipment in Cuba was already well under way. The Cuban-Soviet communiqué issued on Guevara's departure on 2 September publicly acknowledged Soviet military assistance to Cuba for the first time. This was followed on 11 September by the Soviet government's statement accusing the US of aggressive intentions against Cuba and renewing general promises of Soviet support for the Castro regime. In these statements, as in earlier ones, the Soviet Government avoided committing itself to a specific response in support of Cuba should that country be attacked.

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4. There is evidence that the Cuban leaders were very fearful of a US attack during the summer months. There were numerous "invasion scares" which reached a peak toward the end of August and then began to level off. As early as last June, Cuban officers were reported [redacted] to be fearful of an attack by the US and pessimistic as to the outcome unless the invasion took place after September when "the danger will be over." There are other indications that the Cubans regarded the period of late August and early September as the time of maximum danger. This timing strongly suggests that Raul Castro did not obtain a hard-and-fast Soviet commitment to Cuba's defense during his trip to Moscow in July. It does suggest that the Cuban estimate of the period of maximum danger was pegged to a stage in the installation of Soviet military equipment in Cuba, and that the Cubans felt progressively more secure as the work advanced.

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5. The state of military alert in Cuba was relaxed on 5 September, Che Guevara had talked with Khrushchev on 30 August, and a joint communiqué was issued on 2 September. There could have been a connection, but there is no evidence to support such a relation. Guevara, who stopped over in Prague after leaving Moscow, did not return to Havana until 6 September.

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officials could as well have been pegged to the then existing stage in the installation of the Soviet equipment. It would also seem logical that Moscow would make known to the US any Soviet military guarantee to Castro as a means of deterring US action that might involve the USSR and the US in conflict on terms unfavorable to the USSR.

7. There is no evidence that the Castro regime has been admitted to the Warsaw Pact. There was a report that Raul Castro had requested Cuban admission in July but that the request was denied. It was also reported that sometime in early September the Cubans had informed leaders of the Panamanian Communist party that Cuba had secretly concluded a bilateral defense pact with the USSR which was tantamount to bringing Cuba into the Warsaw Pact. This appears to be an exaggerated reference to the 11 September Soviet statement. A Soviet commentary on Cuban developments broadcast on 3 September specifically denied that Cuba was a Warsaw Pact member. In April 1961, Khrushchev denied that the Soviet Union had any military base in Cuba or intended to establish one there; this denial was repeated in the 11 September 1962 Soviet pronouncement.

of Soviet policy is to prevent the US from "liquidating" the Castro regime. He characterized Cuba as an "ideological beachhead for the USSR in Latin America" and as a means of destroying US hegemony in this area. He said the Cuban example stands as proof to the rest of Latin America that the USSR will support and defend any country which takes "the socialist road." He observed that Cuba has become a matter of prestige for both the US and the USSR and that this has produced an "extremely serious" situation in which Moscow cannot afford to retreat from its declarations of support in the event of US aggression. The source indicated that it is difficult to predict what form Soviet support

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would take, but he speculated that the USSR would provide "material" for attacking bases used by US forces for offensive operations against Cuba.

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